

## **Hardin County Early Childhood Promising Practices**

Contact information provided at the end of this document

### **First Connections Program**

The first component of First Connections is Cradle School, which is a program that is available for infants and preschoolers age birth to 5-years-old with no financial or academic stipulations. They model developmentally appropriate activities parents can do at home with their children to prepare them for school readiness and success. The session times are dictated by family need. Sessions are held bi-weekly throughout the year.

The second component is a home visitation/case management program where family needs are assessed and met through a parent educator working within the home. The Parent Educator also worked with children at Spring Haven Domestic Violence Shelter one time per week during the summer months.

The third component is Teens as Parents (TAP). TAP partners a parent educator with pregnant teens within the regular high school environment. The parent educator coordinates sessions with the teens throughout the school year on a variety of topics to include giving birth to a healthy baby, applying for financial assistance (WIC, KCHIP), keeping yourself strong and healthy, finishing high school, etc.

Click [here](#) to view a video about the First Connections Program.

### **Born Learning Academy (BLA)**

This program was provided at one of our schools that houses preschool and kindergarten students but services four feeder schools. BLA is sponsored by Toyota. It is a family program that assists our parents in understanding developmentally appropriate activities using items from around the house in an effort to positively affect brain development. The preschool department facilitates the program with the building administration. High school students studying early childhood assist with activities for children while parents are learning.

### **Preschool Readiness Academy- Funded with Title I funds**

HCS opened two preschool classrooms for non-eligible preschool children in January 2013. Our goal is to provide those children who are on the “bubble” (don’t qualify based on KDE guidelines) with a readiness curriculum with the goal to be on level with their peers when they begin kindergarten. Our priority focus is four-year-olds who have been screened by the HCS Early Childhood Department with a determination of non-eligibility. Criteria for enrollment would include but not be limited to:

- Health issues (like a diabetic child)
- Non-English speaking children
- A child who qualifies but parent will not accept special education (this is rare but has happened)

- Children who are slightly over income
- Professional judgment of Early Childhood staff

Three-year-olds may also be considered for placement. This has made a positive difference in our incoming kindergarten children.

**Books for Babies-** Funded and sponsored by Hardin County AM Rotary Club and The Cecilian Bank

The Books for Babies project began through the Hardin County School System on January 1, 2002. Every baby born at Hardin Memorial Hospital receives a copy of “Read to Your Bunny” by Rosemary Wells. It is a small paperback book that tells parents of the importance of reading to their child for twenty minutes a day. The purpose of this initiative is to educate new parents of the importance of language development and early literacy beginning at birth. The success of this initiative is twofold. First, based on the feedback the hospital receives from families, the book is well received, usable and appreciated. Second, the initiative has not only educated the families of the importance of literacy, it has also educated parents to the fact that reading early in a child’s life helps develop skills that support school and life success.

#### **Preschool Model Sites for Autism Training**

Hardin County's Early Childhood Program at Heartland Elementary School was selected to be one of the Model Sites for Autism Training for the 2012-13 school year in the GRREC region. The Kentucky Autism Training Center provided a 3-day training in June 2012 for the four teams in the GRREC region who are participating in the program. This year, North Park Elementary School (preschool & kindergarten only) will participate in the Model Autism program. Staff from University of Louisville visit the classroom twice a month to collect data and to collaborate with the staff on how to assist in making the students with autism more successful. They also provide on-going training based on the needs of the focus students.

A plan is developed to address the specific needs/skills of the students. Data is gathered on these specific skills twice a month. Staff uses the same prompting procedures to ensure that all staff is being consistent. Strategies are developed and tweaked based on the data collected. Being a model classroom, other educators in Early Childhood Programs may visit and see the interventions in action.

#### **Communicare SEED Grant**

The KY SEED grant received by the Lincoln Trail RIAC will supply \$275,000 over three years into our community to help increase Early Childhood knowledge, services, and resources. Community partners from Hardin, Larue, Grayson, Meade, Breckinridge, Nelson, Washington, and Marion counties will work with RIAC to discuss the best ways to use the money in promoting Early Childhood services. We have finished our three years and are still focusing on ways to increase help with autism in our community.

#### **Hardin County Early Childhood Council**

Our council has received grants from KDE this school year. We have been able to provide training in the Second Step curriculum, Growing Up Wild, Strengthening Families, etc. for preschool staff and child care staff in the community of Hardin County. Technical assistance is being provided by council members as a follow-up benefit to the training. The HCS Preschool Director serves as the co-chairman of this council.

**Get Ready Camp!**- Initially funded by a grant from PNC, now funded through the community and from support of the Hardin County CECC

Get Ready Camp! Is focused on a team of two certified teachers providing educational activities for the family in the areas of math, literacy, science and the arts. It is a camp that operates five days per week for four weeks. The targeted audience is birth to five years and their families. It is held at two locations within Hardin County Schools and one location in Elizabethtown Independent often in conjunction with the summer feeding program. The activities were founded in the early childhood standards and will use materials that families have at home.

Another very important part of the grant involves sending two teachers to childcare facilities to work with their teachers on strategies to use in the classroom. The childcare facilities voluntarily signed up so they acknowledged the need for this coaching/ collaborating. The two teams of two teachers each will visit the same childcare facility once a week, the same day for five weeks.

Click [here](#) to view a video about Get Ready Camp!

### **Summer in Action Math Camp**

This camp is offered at Howeavally and Lakewood. Last year, it was only offered at Howeavally. Due to readiness scores in these two locations, we added Lakewood this year. A team of two certified teachers provides educational activities for the family using the early childhood standards as the guide. The targeted audience is three to six year olds and their families. The content area changes each year. In addition to the camp, we provide daily math lessons for one week to five or six child care centers as an additional component of our summer program. A staff member goes to the center and teaches lessons to their children and works along side the staff. Adult lunches for Howeavally and Lakewood families were paid for by the project during Summer in Action camp in another effort to entice families to attend. Ages and Stages Questionnaires were passed out to all families who attended Summer in Action camp. A completed, returned questionnaire allows families to select a book or two for pleasure reading. Each family received a game to reinforce the concepts taught at the camp. The games were made by the preschool staff and families can keep them.

### **Summer Parents as Teachers Program**

This program was offered this summer (due to staffing changes), there were some funds available to afford the following for kindergarten readiness: analyze Kindergarten Readiness scores plotted on a demographic map, identify lowest performing areas

(Howe valley, Lakewood) and collaborate with preschool and FRYSC to target and recruit four to six families with children getting ready to enter kindergarten. These children received individualized instruction in their own homes (to eliminate transportation barrier) from a trained parent educator. Parent Educator conducted 60-90 minute home visitation session with each family.

### **Two Instructional Assistants in Every Classroom**

This has made our classrooms seamless and efficient. An IECE teacher is in every classroom. We employ two instruction assistants to create a solid team focused on the needs of children. Adult breaks and lunches are held without interruption of the school day as the ratio is still maintained.

### **Blended State-Funded Preschool and Head Start Model**

Hardin County Schools and Central Kentucky Head Start have partnered for twenty years. 75 children in HCS Preschool program also receive Head Start services.

### **Preschool Adopt a Child Care Center Initiative**

Each preschool team adopts a childcare center in their school area. The main focus is to improve communication among the "prior settings" for the family. Our preschool teams make a visit to the center with a goodie bag, team contact information, etc. Our preschools teams also visit again at the end of the year and take information to help decrease summer slide.

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